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SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

Activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC)

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In resolution 46/73 B of 11 December 1991, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to submit reports of the Joint United Nations Information Committee to the consecutive sessions of the Committee on Information". The present report, covering the activities of JUNIC during 1992, has been prepared in response to this request.

2. JUNIC held its eighteenth session at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, under the chairmanship of Mr. Richard Lydiker, Director of Information of FAO. Information directors and officials of 28 United Nations bodies, including specialized agencies and related organizations, attended the session. The meeting discussed a variety of issues of mutual concern, with a view to further developing inter-agency cooperation and coordination in the field of public information. The report on the session was presented to the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in document ACC/1992/24. Below are some highlights from that report, as well as some of the follow-up action on decisions taken at the session:

(a) JUNIC held extensive discussions on the future of Development Forum, which had been experiencing a serious financial crisis due to the dwindling financial support for its production. JUNIC agreed that there was a continued need for a system-wide publication on development issues and decided to establish a technical group to look into all its aspects, including format and editorial content, intended readership, supervision of editorial and business aspects of the periodical, budget and sources of funding, etc. The members of the group included the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund,

United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. While these discussions were still in progress, it became obvious that in the absence of a firm financial commitment by its sponsors, Development Forum could continue production beyond the end of 1992 only through a substantial increase in the General Assembly subvention. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, at the recommendation of the Secretary-General, 1/ decided against this course of action and accordingly, Development Forum ceased production as of 31 December 1992.

(b) JUNIC also devoted considerable attention to the issue of financing of the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), which over the years had struggled to maintain its core programme despite the insufficient and unstable financing for its activities on behalf of the organizations of the United Nations system. JUNIC expressed its strong support for the work of NGLS which throughout its existence had developed an excellent record of fostering a dialogue between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It agreed on the continued need to further strengthen the cooperation between the organizations of the system and NGOs. In view of that objective, and in order to ensure a stable financial base for NGLS, JUNIC agreed that the Service become a jointly financed United Nations system activity, based on voluntary and sustainable financial contributions.

(c) With regard to the participation in international exhibitions, JUNIC adopted the revised Guidelines for the joint participation by the United Nations system in international exhibitions. It also approved the feasibility study on the participation at the Taejon International Exposition to be held in 1993 in the Republic of Korea. Following the conclusion of the JUNIC session and the conclusion of negotiations with the authorities of the Republic of Korea, the Department of Public Information as the lead agency has proceeded with the arrangements for participation in Taejon Expo '93.

(d) JUNIC gave a critical assessment of the joint participation of the organizations of the system in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and agreed that despite tremendous logistical difficulties, their joint participation had been very successful and provided for extensive worldwide exposure of the United Nations system and the environment question. JUNIC agreed to follow closely the consultations among the agencies of the system regarding future institutional arrangements for follow-up action on issues relating to environment and development, in order to ensure that any such arrangements include an appropriate information component.

(e) JUNIC also discussed the proposals for inter-agency activities relating to upcoming major events, including: the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, International Year for the World's Indigenous People (1993), International Year of the Family (1994), the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations (1995). JUNIC agreed with the proposals for an inter-agency information programme for the World Conference on Human Rights presented by DPI and encouraged the finalization of similar programmes for the other events.

(f) With regard to inter-agency cooperation in the production and promotion of audiovisual materials, JUNIC discussed several issues of interest

to participating organizations with a view to further strengthening a coordinated approach to issues of mutual concern. It agreed to finance the distribution of the recently completed television series entitled Agenda for a small planet - IV and approved in principle the co-sponsoring of the future Agenda V series, scheduled to be completed by 1995.

(g) JUNIC also discussed issues relating to the joint participation in international film festivals and video markets and agreed to proceed with the production of a new system-wide film and video catalogue. JUNIC also agreed to hold an ad hoc meeting of photo editors under the auspices of DPI in New York to discuss a variety of technical issues of mutual concern.

(h) JUNIC agreed to discuss on a continuing basis the use of computer technology in the field of information, and periodically to hold workshops that could focus on the use of modern technology in a variety of areas, including television, radio, publishing and photography. JUNIC decided to establish a technical advisory group on the use of computer technology, to be coordinated by FAO. The Group held its first meeting in New York on 15 and 16 March 1993. The report on its activities will be presented to JUNIC at its nineteenth session.

(i) JUNIC agreed to the offer by the United Nations Development Programme to host a workshop for the Directors of Information of bilateral agencies and interested JUNIC members. The workshop is expected to be held in New York in June 1993. One of the major issues of discussion at this event will relate to the possible areas of cooperation between the developed and the developing countries in the field of broadcasting.

3. The nineteenth session of JUNIC is scheduled to take place from 20 to 22 July 1993 at the headquarters of the International Maritime Organization in London. JUNIC is expected to follow up on a number of activities initiated last year, including the new system-wide publication on development issues, preparation of joint programmes of information activities for upcoming major events, including the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, the 1995 World Summit on Social Development, the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations (1995) and others.

4. The nineteenth session is also expected to recommend to the ACC the name of the next Chairman of JUNIC.

Notes

1/ A/CN.1/R/1162.
